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24 AUG 1978

Honorable Charles E. Bennett  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Bennett:

Your letter of 19 July 1978 to the President was forwarded to me for comments. In the letter you expressed concern about the unauthorized disclosures of classified information and offered for our consideration H.R. 89, a bill which would amend the National Security Act of 1947 by establishing procedures and standards for the classification and declassification of sensitive information and material.

Since I last wrote to you in January 1978, E.O. 12065 has been issued to replace E.O. 11652, "Classification and Declassification of National Security Information and Material" which H.R. 89 would codify. The new Executive Order is the result of an extensive Executive Branch review of the classification system and in particular of E.O. 11652. The thrust of E.O. 12065 is to classify less, declassify sooner and to provide better protection for the material which will require protection. I believe that it will meet many of the problems we may have with classification abuses. However, we need more time to test out the new Executive Order before we come to the decision to embody it in a statute.

The adequacy of present statutory sanctions is of concern to me and is a matter under extensive study in the Executive Branch. This includes a review of those provisions of H.R. 89 which impose criminal sanctions for intelligence leaks.

I have been in touch, of course, with Attorney General Bell on this subject matter, and we would be happy to keep you advised.

Yours sincerely,

SIGNED

STANSFIELD TURNER

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